

Message Text

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ORIGIN COME-00

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 EB-11 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

RSC-01 /034 R

66603

DRAFTED BY: COM/BIC-287/DCLINVILLE

APPROVED BY: EB/OCA/REP:LHPOMEROY

COM/BIC-287/SDHORNER

COM/OED/OBOD/RECOHEN

COM/BIC/OIM/CAMURRAY(INFO)

STATE/EA/K/HFNEWSOM(INFO)

----- 078012

R 111540Z JAN 74

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

UNCLAS STATE 006157

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, KS

SUBJECT: INVESTMENT LICENSING OPPORTUNITY- EXTRUDED NEOPRENE
JOINTS

REF: SEOUL'S T-0089

1. COMMERCE REVIEWED SUBJECT OPPORTUNITY WITH RICHARD CROWN,
VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER OF ACME HIGHWAY PRODUCTS.
CROWN WAS MOST HELPFUL AND MADE SEVERAL PERTINENT OBSERVATIONS
RE POTENTIAL FOR PRODUCING NEOPRENE JOINTS IN KOREA.

2. ACME WOULD CONSIDER THE MANUFACTURE OF NEOPRENE JOINTS IN
KOREA UNDER A JOINT VENTURE OR SIMILAR ARRANGEMENT. HOWEVER,
CROWN SERIOUSLY DOUBTS IF BASIC CAPABILITY FOR EXTRUSION OF
NEOPRENE IS AVAILABLE IN KOREA. NEOPRENE IS VERY DIFFICULT TO
HANDLE AND, ACCORDING TO CROWN, ONLY THREE U.S. FIRMS POSSESS
THIS TECHNOLOGY. PROVIDED THE TECHNOLOGY COULD BE DEVELOPED
IN KOREA, CROWN ASSUMES THERE WOULD BE AN OVERALL COST SAVINGS,
BUT CAN MAKE NO ESTIMATE, AT THIS TIME. THE LOCAL PRODUCTION
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OF STEEL SHAPES WOULD BE ONE KEY FACTOR IN COST SAVINGS. THE

TIME FRAME INVOLVED IN STARTING UP A NEW PLANT WOULD BE APPROXIMATELY ONE YEAR.

3. IN DISCUSSING POSSIBILITIES FOR ACME PARTICIPATION IN KOREA'S BRIDGE PROGRAM, WE SUGGESTED TO CROWN AN ARRANGEMENT WHEREBY ACME WOULD INITIALLY SUPPLY NEOPRENE INSERTS FROM THE U.S. AND A KOREAN COMPANY PRODUCE THE STEEL JOINTS. CROWN BELIEVES THIS APPROACH MIGHT BE WORTHWHILE PURSUING WITH ROKG OFFICIALS.

4. CROWN WAS SOMEWHAT CONFUSED BY THE TERM "TYPE H JOINT" IN PARAGRAPH 4 REFTEL. ACME MAKES AN EXPANSION JOINT AND A MODULAR JOINT, BOTH OF WHICH HAVE APPLICATION IN BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION. THE EXPANSION JOINT UTILIZES A STEEL SHAPE AND A NEOPRENE INSERT. THE MODULAR JOINT UTILIZES SEVERAL NEOPRENE COMPONENTS. CROWN IS SENDING US TECHNICAL LITERATURE WHICH WE WILL FORWARD TO EMBASSY. SUGGEST EMBASSY REVIEW THIS MATERIAL WITH ROKG MINISTRY OF CONSTRUCTION AND REPRESENTATIVE OF WILBUR SMITH. CROWN BELIEVES WE SHOULD CLARIFY TECHNICAL ASPECTS ASAP.

5. ACME APPEARS SINCERELY INTERESTED IN INVESTIGATING POTENTIAL FOR ENTERING KOREAN MARKET AND IS FLEXIBLE, AS TO BEST APPROACH. COMMERCE PREPARED WORK CLOSELY WITH ACME AND, IF APPROPRIATE, CONTACT WILBUR SMITH. AFTER EMBASSY HAS OPPORTUNITY DISCUSS PROJECT FURTHER WITH ROKG, MAY WISH TO SUGGEST SPECIFIC KOREAN COMPANIES THAT COULD BE PROSPECTIVE PARTNERS OR DISTRIBUTORS FOR ACME. WE ASSUME MINISTRY OF CONSTRUCTION WOULD BE IN POSITION TO IDENTIFY KOREAN MANUFACTURERS OF STEEL SHAPES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE006157
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: 287/DCLINVILLE
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740147/aaaabsea.tel
Line Count: 90
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN COME
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: SEOUL'S T-0089
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: elyme
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 OCT 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 OCT 2002 by kellew0>; APPROVED <18-Nov-2002 by elyme>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INVESTMENT LICENSING OPPORTUNITY- EXTRUDED NEOPRENE JOINTS
TAGS: BEXP, KS
To: SEOUL
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005